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Section Intro: Acceptance and Identity

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SECTION INTRO

Acceptance

Acceptance is an elusive topic that often comes up between people who feel placed on the outside. While a paradox, we find power in both exclusivity and inclusivity. We tend not to feel these emotions directly. We work towards them, under the stipulation that the disconnected feelings will subside.

Acceptance must come from within. You can ask it of others all you want and do whatever it takes to obtain it, but ultimately it is a fruitless effort if you do not accept yourself first. The pieces presented here capture the struggles people endure while accepting the truths of their lives. These powerful texts embrace the imperfections we all carry while championing the personal struggles we overcome. On some level there is a sense of camaraderie with the authors' internal feelings. Being on the outside is a part of life; overcoming it is living life.

—Genevieve Anita Thomas, Editor

Identity: It is constructed, certainly, but by whom exactly is a less definitive matter. From the time we enter this world, our personas begin to form beyond our control. Where we are from, what our parents do for a living, what we look like, the manner in which we speak—we are judged for all of these, regardless of who we really are as people, regardless of our true identities.

So often we get caught up defining ourselves by comparison, seeing if we measure up to society's yardstick. And yet, it is in this process that so many individuals lose themselves. They only recognize who they have become when they are at the end of their ropes. If you find yourself there, then you have become strikingly aware that while a judgmental culture has hijacked your identity, it is still for you to decide who you will become.





Identity

you cannot accept yourself. What good is the acceptance of a sea of faces when you have trouble looking at your own? It is a struggle and we all desire to find our place, but seeking the approval of a relentlessly demanding society is a task which ultimately leaves you hollow.

Choose to be the person you desire to be, and you may find yourself rejected by some, and judged by many. But for those who do accept you, you will find yourself in the company of people who make you proud of who you are, people who show you that you do belong.

These next pieces tackle difficult questions of identity and social acceptance, each in their own unique way. They exemplify the tension between meeting your own expectations for yourself and meeting social norms. By exploring the difficulty posed by self-reflection, they discover the good it may lead to. Fundamentally, each piece asks us to be honest with ourselves in a way that is both frightening and unsettling, but strangely cathartic at the same time.

—George Edinger, Editor

It is in those moments of loss, desperation, or facilitated reflection that you become conscious of how your environment has shaped you, and how you have shaped your environment—good, bad, or otherwise. And yes, we are dynamic beings. It is not in our nature to remain static. But it is also not inherent that we change in a way which is self-directed, which is informed by our experience and not simply an instinctual response to it.

Are you happy with who you are? Are you content with the decisions that have invariably resulted in the person you have become? It is not bad if your answer is no. Rather, it is that personal honesty that allows you to consciously progress into the person you want to be. As much as society may condition us to seek external acceptance, the endeavor is useless if

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